

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 18, 2008

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim McCrery
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Peterson, Harkin, Rangel, and Baucus and Ranking Members Goodlatte, Chambliss, McCrery, and Grassley:

We oppose using a limitation on physician-owned hospitals as an offset in the Farm Bill conference report.

First and foremost, any limitations on physician-owned hospitals are within the jurisdiction of the House Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee. Second, such a limitation should not be used precariously to offset agricultural spending in a bill that does nothing to address rising health care costs or ensure patients' access to care. This provision, put simply, pays for farm bill spending at the expense of all Americans. It restricts patient choice and jeopardizes access to quality care, particularly in underserved communities and states suffering from hospital and health professional shortages.

Additionally, we are currently waiting for the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to provide us with additional information about how it has been scoring limitations on physician-owned hospitals. In years past, CBO has assigned minimal savings to the Medicare program as a result of limitations on physician-owned hospitals. However, in the last few months, CBO has changed its score of this provision multiple times. In light of this circumstance, we believe it is inappropriate to rely upon CBO's projected savings until CBO is able to respond thoroughly to outstanding Member requests for more information.

It is hard for us to understand why physician-owned hospitals continue to be targeted for budgetary savings time and time again. Physician-owned hospitals provide some of the highest quality care for cardiac, orthopedic, and maternity care services. Three of the top ten cardiac programs, and three of the top ten hospitals for joint-replacement surgery, are physician-owned. Physician-owned hospitals also provide care in many rural areas of the country where patients have few health care options.

This limitation has no place in the Farm Bill, and we respectfully request that it not be considered an offset for the conference agreement.

Sincerely,

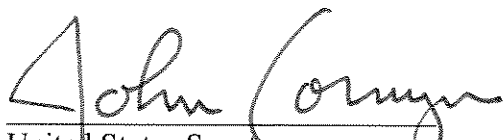
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jon Kyl", with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

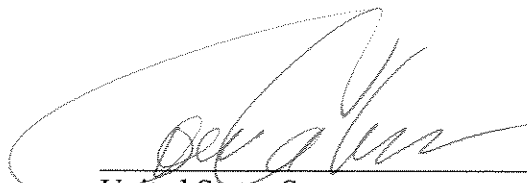
Jon Kyl
United States Senator


A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joe Barton", with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

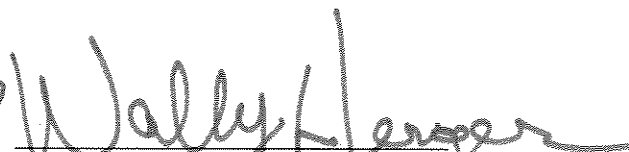
Joe Barton
Member of Congress

cc: House and Senate Farm Bill Conferees



United States Senator


United States Senator


United States Senator



Member of Congress



Member of Congress

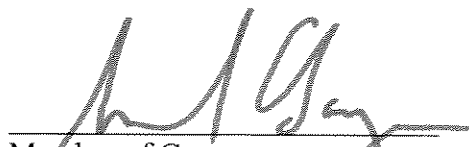

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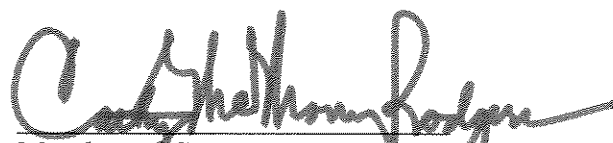

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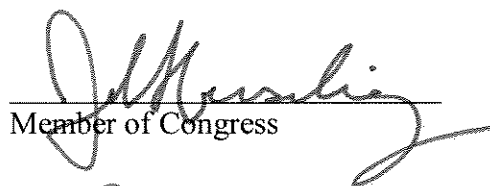

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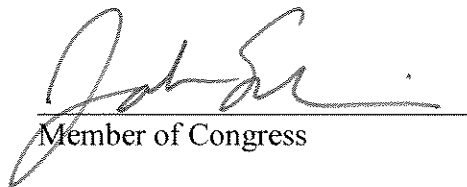

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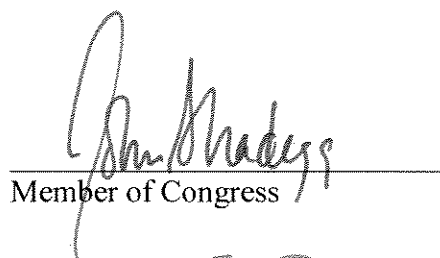

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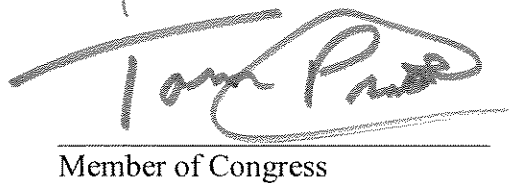

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